

THE MOM & CAREGIVER

DECEMBER 2021
VOLUME 23 ISSUE 12

www.themomandcaregiver.com



OUR TOP TEN FAMILY
CHRISTMAS MOVIES **11**

A FATHER'S LETTER
TO SANTA **12**

HOW TO HAVE THE
PERFECT HOLIDAY
SEASON. SERIOUSLY! **22**

**SWINGIN'
INTO THE
HOLIDAYS!**

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Hey London,

We would like to introduce ourselves - Kari and Ashley Hilton. We're the proud owners of the Pizza Huts here in town.

Pizza Hut London was established in 1986 when Jeff and Kathryn Hilton opened the first of nine Pizza Hut locations right here in the Forest City. After many great years in the business Jeff and Kathy passed the torch to the next generation. We couldn't be more proud to follow in their footsteps.

We both work hands on in the restaurants and behind the scenes while raising our three young children in London, just as Kari's parents once did.

Supporting other locally owned businesses is one of our top priorities. We enjoy giving back to the community by holding fundraisers for local charities and uplifting other local businesses in Forest City. Our annual 12 days of local giveaways on our Instagram page is one of our favourites.

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Much love,

Ashley and Kari Hilton



EDITORIAL	04	The Five Gifts of Christmas
05	EVENTS CALENDAR	December
AS THEY GROW	06	Food Waste
07	THE NEXT STAGE	The COVID Vaccine for Kids
REVITALIZE YOU	08	Natural vs. Chemical Products
09	A WELL ROUNDED APPROACH	Fun and Affordable DIY Gift Ideas
PRO BONO BRIEFS	10	Multilevel Marketing: Top tips for choosing an MLM
11	KID ZONE	Our Top Ten Christmas Movies
FRANKLY FATHERHOOD	12	A Father's Letter to Santa
14	MENTAL FITNESS	Gen-Z Anxiety - What's the Antidote
HOLIDAY RECIPE	15	Peppermint Brookies
16	BIZ SHOWCASE	<i>M.I.understanding</i>
PLANNING IS EVERYTHING	17	Manage the Holidays with a Wee Bit of Planning
18	TMI	Poke the Bear
PET FRIENDLY	19	Holiday Hazards for Your Pets
20	FOOD FOR THOUGHT	Festive Goat Cheese Stuffed Dates
ONE STEP AT A TIME	21	Winter Boots: The Dreaded Search for the Right Fit
22	HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO	How to Have the Perfect Holiday Season.Seriously!

CONTENTS



ON THE COVER

Malone came into the photo shoot excited to explore our winter wonderland set. She loved sitting on the swing but was confused as to why mom couldn't sit on it beside her. During the craziness of the holiday season, it was so lovely to see Malone's calm innocence.

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THE FIVE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Do you know about the 5-gift rule? It's a tradition of giving your little ones five simple gifts on Christmas morning – something they want, something they need, something to wear, something to read, and then one special, magical gift. The 5-gift rule is a wonderful way to keep holiday spending under control, and to remind us all that the simplest of gifts are often the ones that bring the giver and receiver pure joy.

In the “something they want” category, you might pick up that favourite Barbie, Lego set or craft kit they've been eyeing. The “something they need” category might include underwear and socks (at least be sure it has their favourite character on it!), cozy hats or mitts, or fun sheets for their bed. The “something to wear” category is self-explanatory – maybe PJs or slippers, a new coat, or the coolest basketball shoes. Under “something to read”, may I suggest Red is Best for the littles and Frindle for the school-agers – two classics! Lastly, the final gift should be something magical – an unexpected surprise that makes them jump for joy. This can be something lovingly handmade, something they didn't even know they wanted, or an experience.

You can also use the 5-gift rule when reading this month's issue. Here are five simple yet glorious gifts we're giving you, our readers, this month:

Something you want: You'll want the recipe for Goat Cheese Stuffed Dates (page 22). This is the appetizer you have to take to that holiday potluck!

Something you need: You need to know about food waste on page 6. Did you know you can save the environment AND save \$600 - \$1100 per year?

Something to wear: Find instructions for making a beautiful Kwanzaa necklace on our Events page!

Something to read: Turn to page 17 to read all about managing the holidays with a wee bit of planning (financial planning, that is!)

Plus one special, magical gift: Our special gift to you this month is a contest! In fact, two contests! Don't miss our 12+ Days of Holiday Giveaways on our social media pages to win glorious prizes. Plus, be sure to enter your little one in our 17th annual Captured Moments photo contest from Dec. 5 – Jan. 5 for a chance to see them on one of our covers.

From all of us here at The Mom & Caregiver, we wish you the very best kind of holiday – not one filled with stacks of extravagant gifts, but one filled with memories, laughs, family and

Sabina



Love *You will receive all that you need at the time in which it is needed.*

- E. Russell



Editorial photography
by Flavia Zaidan
Make-up by Sanah Zebian



December

Host a Story and Craft Night for the Kiddos,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/snowmen-at-night/

01ST

It's a Great Year to Make Gifts,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/let-the-kids-play-with-their-food/

07TH

Holiday Yummies for the Vegans in Your Life,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/cinnamon-roast-butternut-squash-makes-2-cups/

12TH

Try West African Adinkra Printing,

www.activityvillage.co.uk/adinkra-printing

19TH

Make a Kwanzaa Necklace,

www.activityvillage.co.uk/kwanzaa-necklace-craft

23RD

Heri za Kwanzaa!
Happy Kwanzaa!

26TH

Here's to a Great 2022!

31ST

Ho Ho Healthy Holiday Eating,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/holiday-eating-tips/

03RD

Get in the Spirit with Carols and a Craft,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la/

10TH

Is Santa on a Budget This Year?

www.hugsforkids.com.au/blogs/hugsforkids/the-five-gift-rule

14TH

It's the First Day of Winter! Put Soup on the Stove,

www.themomandcaregiver.com/roasted-chicken-kale-and-buckwheat-soup/

21ST

Merry Christmas!

25TH

Maybe You Admired the Windows at Christmas Eve Church?

www.themomandcaregiver.com/stained-glass-wonders/

27TH



WHAT TO WEAR TO YOUR HOLIDAY PARTY!

'Tis the season (hopefully this year!) for festivities and holiday gatherings! It's always fun (or maybe a bit daunting) to figure out that perfect Holiday Outfit! Look for a combination of something you will reach for again, paired with a statement or bold piece. I always go for comfort too so you will never see me in a pair of stilettos! Here are a few ideas:

***Your favourite LBT** paired with a fantastic jacket (think velvet, plaid, textured or patterned)

***A bold dress** in an animal print or a bright colour paired with a solid jacket, faux fur rap or chunky jewellery

***A fitted suit** with a great blouse! You can wear a solid coloured suit, mix your patterns or go for a plaid top and bottom!



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FOOD WASTE

Wasting food not only wastes money but is bad for the environment because it produces harmful greenhouse gas emissions (like methane) that contribute to climate change. Food waste is hard to avoid with small children. Try offering even smaller portions and then offer more if eaten.

According to the National Zero Waste Council, consumers are responsible for the largest share of food waste, approximately 47% of total food waste. The remaining food waste is created along the food supply chain (retail, restaurants, hotels).

Reducing food waste at home can be relatively easy, help you get more out of your food and save you money. We often waste good food because we buy too much, don't plan our meals, or don't store our food properly.

It's estimated that avoidable food waste costs the average Canadian household from \$600-\$1,100 per year.

The City of London is exploring a Green Bin Program to be started in 2022.

Green bin programs can help use some of the unavoidable food waste, but it is still better to prevent the wasted food in the first place. 

TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR FOOD WASTE

- 1 Plan your meals ahead of time. This helps determine how much food you need. (www.unlockfood.ca/en/menuplanner.aspx)
- 2 Make a grocery list and stick to it. This avoids bringing home unnecessary extras that can't be used before spoiling.
- 3 Store your food properly. Know what goes in the fridge, freezer or left on the counter and for how long.
- 4 Use "Best Before" dates as a guide for optimal freshness, taste, texture, and nutritional value. They are not an expiry date. Many foods are useable after the "Best Before" date and do not need to be thrown out.
- 5 If you like having leftovers in the fridge, plan to use them in different ways so it feels new. (www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/recipes)
- 6 Prepare just enough. Unused leftovers mean money in the garbage and eventually the landfill.

For more information, check out National Zero Food Waste's Love Food Hate Waste (<https://lovefoodhatewaste.ca/>).

1 Government of Canada. (2020, December 14). Food loss and waste. Government of Canada. www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/managing-reducing-waste/food-loss-waste.html

2 National Zero Waste Council. (2020). The high cost of food waste. National Zero Waste Council. www.nzwc.ca/focus-areas/food/issue/Pages/default.aspx

3 Dietitians of Canada. (2020, February 21). Tips pm reducing food waste at home. UnlockFood. www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Cooking-And-Food/Cooking-Methods/Tips-On-Reducing-Food-Waste-At-Home.aspx

4 London Canada. (2021, April 13). London's green bin. London Canada. Get Involved London. www.getinvolved.london.ca/greenbin

5 Government of Canada. (2021, July 5). Safe food storage. Government of Canada. www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/safe-food-storage.html

6 Canadian Food Inspection Agency. (2019, December 12). Date labeling on pre-packaged foods. Government of Canada. <https://inspection.canada.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/consumers/date-labelling/eng/1332357469487/133235745633>

Submitted by Ginette Blake BAsc RD on behalf to the Middlesex-London Community Early Years Partnership



THE COVID VACCINE FOR KIDS

By the time this article is published in December, there will be more clear guidance on the COVID vaccine in children from ages 5 to 11. The Centres for Disease Control in the States has approved the Pfizer vaccine in children of this age group and Canada will soon follow suit.

Should you vaccinate your child for COVID-19? Here are some considerations to take into account as you make that decision:

- 1** Although COVID-19 disease is mild in most children, it can have consequences in terms of severe disease and hospitalization. Though less frequent than in older adults, it is a very real possibility.
- 2** The pandemic has had a toll on the mental health and education of children. A vaccine may allow for greater return to normalcy. Younger children benefit most from in-person school and socialization.

- 3** The vaccine is safe. There is good safety data on the use of the vaccine in children. The dose administered to children is about a third of that given to adults. The side effects seem to be on par with those of common childhood vaccines.
- 4** Children have a very robust response to the COVID vaccine meaning that they develop good immunity with the vaccine, nearly 91 percent effective.

There are many important considerations in deciding whether to vaccinate your child. The approval and rollout of the vaccine are imminent. Use this time to have conversations with trusted sources. Your primary health care provider, your pharmacist or public health officials can help you decide what is best. Avoid social media posts and look for trusted sources such as the Public Health Agency of Canada or our local Middlesex London Health Unit for reliable information. 



Dr. Bhooma Bhayana is a family physician in London and the mother of two young men and proud grandmother of two! She continues to find wonder and enjoyment in family practice despite more than 30 years on the job!

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NATURAL VS. CHEMICAL PRODUCTS



Natural skin care products are the safest and the most effective means to maintain the good health of your skin. For ages, nature has provided the medical industry with ingredients that have powerful antibiotic, antiseptic, or anti-inflammatory properties.

Natural dermatological products are mostly found in the form of ointments or creams, which are quickly absorbed by the superficial layers of the skin. They are effective against most skin conditions and successfully treat local irritation or rashes. Chemically enhanced products may harm your body by releasing malign substances into the bloodstream.

The main advantage of using natural skin care products is their hypo-allergenic character; they are proven to be very well tolerated by the skin. This is due to the fact that natural products contain no additives or preservatives. Natural skin care products that are properly formulated to match specific skin

care needs often cost no more than their synthetic opponents.

However, the main disadvantage of all natural skin care products is that they tend to lose their properties sooner. Unlike products that are chemically processed and contain synthetic preservatives, natural products alter more quickly, and therefore you should always make sure you check the expiration date before buying such natural skin care products.

Skin care products may only treat the effects of a disease, not always the infectious disease itself. That may be caused by hormonal imbalances inside the body, and an internal treatment must be used. Well tolerated natural skin care products in the form of creams or lotions applied on the affected skin then complete the treatment by controlling the condition externally. Therefore, if you have a skin infection, you should pay a visit to your

dermatologist first and ask for advice regarding the appropriate treatment.

Despite their successful use among the medical branches, natural skin care products are also very effective for cosmetic purposes. The cosmetic industry offers a wide range of natural products that improve the esthetics of skin, including anti-aging products.

Regardless of their purposes, natural skin care products are the best alternative for synthetic ones, and when properly used, their beneficial actions are quickly noticeable. &

*Lily Seed
Owner/Spa Director
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FUN AND AFFORDABLE DIY GIFT IDEAS

I love giving homemade gifts. They are fun to do and super affordable. Yes, they require a bit of planning ahead but luckily these DIY gifts are easy to make and won't take much of your time. Plus friends, family, grandparents, and teachers are sure to love them!

PEPPERMINT SUGAR SCRUB

- ¾ white sugar
- ½ cup fractionated coconut oil
- 10 drops peppermint essential oil
- 1 small Mason jar

Mix the sugar and fractionated coconut oil together then add your drops of peppermint. Once mixed, add to your Mason jar and decorate with ribbon and bows.

OH CHRISTMAS TREE ROOM SPRAY

- 16 oz (500 ml) glass spray bottle
- 8 oz (250 ml) distilled water
- 60 ml (4 tbsp) witch hazel (or substitute 2 tsp Epsom salts)
- 10 drops Cinnamon Bark essential oil
- 10 drops Wild Orange essential oil
- 15 drops Douglas Fir or Siberian Fir essential oil

Add all ingredients to the glass spray bottle and spray as needed. This is great to spray into an artificial Christmas tree and around the room to give the smell of Christmas.

All the oils I use for these recipes are doTERRA as they are the oils I love and trust for my family. If you have any questions about essential oils or doTERRA products I would be happy to help you out! 🎁



Meaghan Terzis - Lifestyle Coach and Biz Mentor; empowering women through fitness, essential oils and healthy living. meaghanterziswellness.com

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MULTILEVEL MARKETING: TOP TIPS FOR CHOOSING AN MLM

Multilevel marketing (“MLM”) companies can offer opportunities for moms, dads and caregivers looking to start a side business. Having said this, not all MLMs are alike, and it can be hard to know which one might be good for you. Here’s a top five list of things to look out for if you’re looking to join an MLM:

1 Like the product! Selling something is a lot easier when you actually like the product. People can tell if you believe in something, as opposed to just trying to sell something off.

2 Of all the different kinds of MLMs, party planning companies typically make the most money for their new participants.

So, consider joining companies where you gather people and sell at an event, even where it is done virtually.

3 Many MLM companies offer a business in a box. When you start up, you would automatically have a website set up, and products to sell. If you are looking for a low

barrier way to start a small business, joining this kind of MLM may be a good way to start.

4 If something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. Promises of luxury lifestyles for little work are big red flags. Avoid these companies. Like any other job, rewards only come with hard work.

5 Ask the MLM you are interested in joining for an income disclosure statement. An income disclosure statement will let you know how much you can expect to earn. Also, take a look at the enrollment fee, and any other mandatory fees. Figure out if this something you can budget for.

Choosing the right MLM can provide great flexibility for stay-at-home parents and caregivers looking to make some extra money on the side. If you, a partner, or a friend of yours is looking to join an MLM, consider these five tips. 

Michael Weinberger, Business & Privacy Law Lawyer, Siskinds



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OUR TOP TEN CHRISTMAS MOVIES

10 *How The Grinch Stole Christmas - We love the old cartoon version.*

Charlie: I love how the dog Max is loyal to the Grinch even though he is treated badly by him.

Harrison: I love how the Grinch forgave everyone once he realized how good it was to be around people again.

9 *A Charlie Brown Christmas - We think people love this because it reminds them of their childhood.*

Charlie: Charlie Brown thinks no one cares about him, but he realizes everyone does when he sees the Christmas tree.

Harrison: I love all of the music from the show. We listen to the soundtrack almost every day during the Christmas season.

8 *Arthur Christmas*

Charlie: I enjoy how Arthur perseveres and never gives up on getting the present to a little girl.

Harrison: I laughed so hard at this movie - it's so funny! And the message I took from it is that every child matters.

7 *No Sleep 'Til Christmas - We love this movie because we are in it! It's not really a children's Christmas movie, it's a Romantic Comedy, but it is fun to watch.*

Charlie: I like this movie because it was fun being on set. We learned a lot about movie making and how long one scene takes to film.

Harrison: This movie was filmed in Toronto but they made it look like a city in the United States. It was a hot day in the middle of July and filming a movie wearing winter clothes was ridiculously hot!

6 *The Christmas Chronicles*

Charlie: This movie is about the Christmas Spirit. Santa looks different from most of the pictures I've seen - he's a modern Santa for modern times.

Harrison: This is a wonderful movie about how Teddy doesn't believe in himself. At the end of the movie, with the help of his sister, he believes in himself again.

5 *A Christmas Story - You either love this movie or you hate it. We love the dark humour.*

Charlie: The narrator has the best voice and is the funniest part of the movie. The one-liners are epic! "You'll shoot your eye out!"



Harrison: Ralphie has to put on a bunny suit he gets as a Christmas present from his Aunt Clara and his "old man" describes it as looking like a Deranged Easter Bunny.

4 *The Polar Express*

Charlie: My favourite part of this movie is when the boy receives the first gift of Christmas. He loses it but it ends up under his Christmas tree on Christmas morning.

Harrison: My favourite part is when the boy discovers that he can hear the sleigh bell and

realizes that he does believe in Christmas.

3 *Elf - Buddy reminds everyone of a child. When he sees the world outside of the North Pole, everything is new and excites him.*

Charlie: My favourite part is when Buddy and his half-brother Michael are decorating the Christmas tree and Buddy puts the star on the tree by bouncing off the couch and knocks everything over.

Harrison: My favourite part is when Buddy shows off his dance skills while working in the basement mailroom at his dad's work. He can bust a move!

2 *Christmas Vacation - We don't know anyone that doesn't love this movie.*

Charlie: The most hilarious part is when Clark sprays his metal sledding saucer with cooking spray and then has a legendary sled ride.

Harrison: My favourite part of the movie is when Aunt Bethany hears the squeaking noise and it ends up being a squirrel that is living in the Christmas tree!

1 *Home Alone - This is our favourite because Kevin McAllister is only eight years old and outsmarts "The Wet Bandits".*

Harrison: All of the pranks Kevin plays on the burglars are hilarious. I love when the paint cans come swinging from the second floor and knock the burglars down the stairs.

Charlie: I love how Kevin sets up the living room to make it look like the whole family is home and he's not alone. He uses a Michael Jordan cut-out, mannequins, his train set and a record player. 🎧

Meet 11 year-old twins, Charlie and Harrison, our new Kid Zone writers! Each month, they'll be sharing perspectives on life as a child sees it.



A FATHER'S LETTER TO SANTA

Dear Santa,

It's been several decades since my last letter – sorry about that, life got a little busy. As my kids get ready to write letters to you, I thought I'd tag along this time. This year, more than ever, I need to believe in some holiday magic. So how about indulging this “big kid” with my own list of wishes for Christmas?

I wish that all families can celebrate this season together. As restrictions become lighter, and vaccination rates are higher, we're long overdue for a “normal” holiday season. Let's shed the judgmental ugliness that this pandemic brought out in one another, put our differences aside, and just gather for the sake of healing and reuniting our family ties.

I wish for more families to help each other out. If you're fortunate enough to have uninterrupted income during the pandemic, maybe you can reach out and help another family. Look to contribute to local charities that help with shelter, food or presents. And if you are a parent in need, it may be time to put that pride aside and tap into these resources.

I wish for an uninterrupted school year. So many of our kids struggled academically and emotionally during at-home learning. They need the time to catch up and to ease back into the beautiful and social world of childhood friendships.

I wish for more courage. Let our kids (and parents too!) find the courage and perseverance they need to get through tough times. Whether it's dealing with a school bully or the loss of a family member, let their hearts mend quickly after being hurt.

And finally, I wish for more kindness. I wish we all had a bit more patience with one another and treated everyone with more kindness. We're all carrying more baggage than usual and dealing the best we can with this tumultuous past year. Let's try not to anger so quickly, let's learn to breathe slower, and show compassion for those around us.

Thanks for hearing me out Santa. I know I'm asking for a lot, but I have faith in my fellow parents out there. We all have it in us to teach our kids to be good people through our example.

Yours truly,
Frank



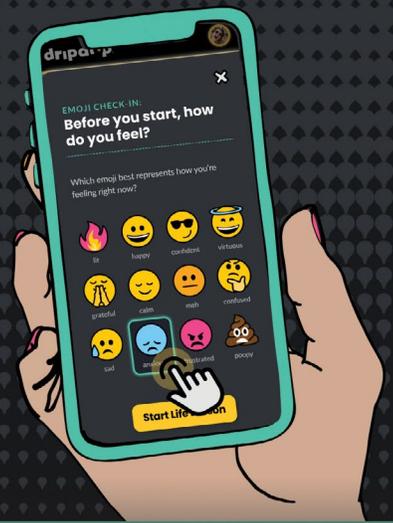


Dear Son

Frank Emanuele is a proud father of two sons, a special education teacher, and a director of Dad Club London



GEN-Z ANXIETY



WHAT'S THE ANTIDOTE?

As parents, we know anxiety is soaring. A meta-analysis examining 29 studies from around the globe confirmed it. Anxiety and depression symptoms have doubled in teens and kids since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. In Canada, calls to the Kid's Helpline rose from 1.9M to a shocking 4.1M during that time.

How do we help our kids be more emotionally and mentally resilient, so they can handle the challenges of today?

That's the question I ask myself every day. I'm Jason Brown, the CEO of dripdrop—the Mental Fitness App for Gen Z.

I believe mental fitness is the antidote families need. I introduced meditation and breathwork to my tween son, Dexter. I saw the positive impact firsthand. So, I launched an app to help all teens improve their mental game, one drip at a time.

The dripdrop app empowers youth to build mental and emotional resiliency. One short, engaging video lesson at a time. To teach these lessons, I curated a community of experts.

One of those experts is Jennifer Kolari, founder of Connected Parenting. Jennifer is a child and family therapist. She's an international speaker and one of the nation's leading parenting experts. Her course How to Tame Your Anxiety Dog is one of dripdrop's most sought-after lesson series.

Jennifer likens anxiety to a "big, goofy guard dog" doing its best to protect you. She walks through how to recognize, befriend and tame your "anxiety dog." It's a clever, insightful way to make the process of managing anxiety easier.

The series also explains the connection between anxiety and procrastination. Jennifer shares the underlying brain science. Then, she outlines the steps to reprogram the brain to ditch procrastination.

Grade 8 student, Daria, a dripdrop user shared what she learned. "My outlook on procrastination has changed so much. If you do what needs to be done right away, you feel better about yourself and don't have to worry about it anymore."

Mental fitness training like this is what I believe will help our kids to face the challenges of today's world.

In these uncertain times, it feels good to know I can help my son be prepared.

To learn more about dripdrop, visit dripdrop.gg

Jason Brown is a proud father of one 14-going-on-18 year old son and the CEO of dripdrop—the Mental Fitness App for Gen Z.

PEPPERMINT BROOKIES

(MAKES 40 COOKIES)



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon canola or coconut oil
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chunks
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 3/4 cup light or dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup candy canes, peppermint hard candies and/or m&m's, chopped

PREPARATION

- 1** Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- 2** Place the butter, oil and 1 cup of chocolate chips in a microwave safe bowl (or in a metal bowl over a double boiler) and heat in 1 minute intervals until chocolate is melted. Allow to cool.

- 3** In another bowl whisk the eggs, peppermint extract, and brown sugar until combined. Stir into the chocolate mixture.
- 4** In another bowl whisk the flour, baking powder and salt to combine. Add the flour mixture into the chocolate/egg mixture and stir to combine.
- 5** Fold in the remaining cup of chocolate chips and chopped candies.
- 6** Freeze the mixture for 10 minutes to firm up slightly.
- 7** Using a 1 tablespoon ice cream scooper or spoon, place the cookies on a parchment or Silpat-lined baking sheet.
- 8** Bake for 12 minutes or until the tops look dry and cracked.
- 9** Cool completely. They will be soft and chewy. 🍪

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M.I. UNDERSTANDING



There's a new rabbit in town!

Designed to support children with worries and big feelings, M.I.friends helps families track behaviour, come up with strategies and create a plan to work together.

Need a rabbit?

For more information:

www.miunderstanding.ca

Each month we introduce you to a business that offers families in London and the surrounding area, services or products you won't want to miss. 🐰

We're helping families manage worries and big feelings. When M.I.understanding started almost eight years ago in London, Ontario, they had one objective: create accessible resources to support families struggling with children's mental health. These resources needed to increase awareness, understanding and the importance of early intervention, while giving families strategies and tools to work together.

With a background in television and some friends with 'Muppet' experience, director Paula Jesty set out to work with community partners to develop a series of videos and resources that could be used by parents at home, schools and community groups to start an important conversation. Working with experts at LHSC, Thames Valley District School Board, Vanier Children's Services and The Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Clinic, her team created a series of videos and resources that have now seen well over 500,000 views across Canada and the United States.

With families, schools and medical partners on board, M.I.understanding needed a community partner. The Kids Mental Health Optimist Club of Canada was formed in London, a partnership that allows the resources to be available to families at no cost, while supporting Optimist Clubs internationally to bring out the best in kids.

M.I. understanding's latest program, 'M.I.Friends' was designed to help families at home develop strategies, start a conversation, and bridge the gap to care with tools to strengthen educational and medical support. This program provides children with a comfort toy (named Poppy), while connecting families to an online video/ activity program, giving parents strategies, tools, resources, and suggestions on how to support their child as they learn to self-regulate.

M.I.Friends also helps community organizations working with families to provide care in the moment to children on long wait lists, and families isolated by the pandemic.

Help this to be a program that is accessible to any family seeking assistance.

Please help us continue to create a community of support for families by sharing our program, or sponsoring a program for a family in need.

For more information, contact: Info@miunderstanding.ca



Paula Jesty
Director

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Creating a community of support for families



MANAGE THE HOLIDAYS WITH A WEE BIT OF PLANNING

For many the holiday season is a joyous, festive time of year. Families find themselves busy preparing for parties, shopping for presents, and pulling out their cherished decorations. The holidays are about sharing, caring, giving and spreading joy—not just for your family, but for others. Many find joy for themselves by volunteering and donating. Small gestures can brighten people's holiday season and transform the world into a better, happier place.

All of this to say that for many of us it can also be difficult to stick to the many holiday goals we have: healthy eating, staying active and keeping our holiday spending budget in check. These priorities can take a back seat to treats, parties, presents and more. Right now can be a great time to focus on some of these areas as they can get away from you during this festive time of year.

At the most basic level, creating and sticking to a budget is key to financial success. While it's no secret that Canadians are going to spend more money now compared to other times of the year, spending can get away from even the most budget-conscious without a clear line of sight on what their money is doing.

Here are a couple of simple financial recommendations as you approach the season of spending:

First, create a budget: The benefits of setting limits and having a clear plan cannot be overstated. Think back to previous years and make a list. Don't start shopping without a plan of what you're going to purchase and how much you plan to spend.

Play within your budget: In fact, it can be helpful to set aside the appropriate amount of cash to cover your planned spending.



Keep your other priorities in mind: Stick up a list of your overall financial goals. Many of you have other priorities which are incredibly important to you. Reminding yourself of these can be an effective strategy when fighting spending impulses.

Gain peace of mind by planning in advance the way you want to manage your holiday experience. 🧑‍💻

Jennifer Taylor, CFP®, PFP, Financial Planner, RBC Royal Bank

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POKE THE BEAR

Most days as a mom, there's at least one moment when I have to fight every natural instinct in my being. When I pause and think to myself for that instant, "oh yeah, well I'll give you something to cry about," or "gimme the name of this punk-ass kid and me and my girl posse will have a chat with him," or "here, let me correct these few little mistakes on your work." But then I snap out of the daydream and carry on in reality.

I just had one of those moments. Tonight, my daughter came home quite upset about something that happened at school. (That's another story.) I proceeded to try and talk to her about it, but she stormed out of the room, yelling at me as she slammed her bedroom door. She mumbled something like, "I don't want to talk to you about it, you won't understand and will just make me

angry." This behaviour isn't uncharacteristic of my daughter, but it certainly is rare. Traditionally, she comes to me within a couple of hours and talks it through but I have a bad feeling about this one. Is this the moment when my child turns into a pubescent nightmare?

I keep waiting for my daughter to give me some kind of enormous grief as a parent. I can't come out of parenthood unscathed.

She was such a good baby, slept like a champ, and I can still count on two hands how many rough nights we had. She's always so caring, cuddly, and chatty.

But the hammer is coming. I can feel it. Lady Karma is hiding behind the corner waiting to jump out at me. Payback!

I remember storming out of the room when my mom was talking to me, yelling at her that "she doesn't understand," and mumbling some sort of "why does everything have to happen to me," statement under my breath as I slammed my bedroom door. My mom usually respected my space in those situations, and I think I turned out pretty well, so I'm going to follow her lead. Wow, it's taking all of my strength to not go in there and poke the bear! 

Janet Smith is a proud single-mom of one daughter and a marketing professional who is grateful for her rural roots in the London area. She is a big believer in connecting with people through laughter and honesty.





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HOLIDAY HAZARDS FOR YOUR PETS

My husband and I bought our first house several years ago and our closing day fell on a beautiful, crisp Thursday in December. The morning we got possession of our new home, all of our belongings were still in transit, so we brought only the essentials: a suitcase, an air mattress, and our cat, Anya.

We excitedly entered the empty house to see that the previous owners had left us a beautiful, bright red poinsettia and a very kind, handwritten welcome note.

However, poinsettias are toxic to pets, so what started out as a thoughtful gesture turned into an intense day-and-a-half battle between the only object in the entire house and the bored housecat who was determined to destroy her target. Finally, our furniture was delivered, and we found a high enough perch to display her forbidden snack out of reach!

That was just the start of holiday hazards for Anya that year. We retired our mini, apartment-sized Christmas tree and bought only the best and biggest that the Canadian Tire clearance section had to offer. Like most cats, Anya thought it was her personal playground.

Unfortunately for Anya, lights and ornaments are a choking hazard and, like anything stringy, tinsel can do extra damage to a pet's digestive tract if ingested. Whenever a pet swallows something it shouldn't, like tinsel, an ornament, toy, bone, or even sharp pine needles from a real tree, it is important to seek veterinary attention immediately.

Christmas trees are also notoriously tippy, especially when curious kitties climb them. This is not safe for others in the household, especially if there are candles nearby, but a cat can also be injured simply from falling from that height. Trees can be secured with sturdy bases and reinforced by tying a piece of fishing wire to a hook in the ceiling.

There are other risks to our furry family members that aren't unique to the holidays, but are seasonal dangers as well, such as antifreeze poisoning. Another danger is pancreatitis brought on from fatty table scraps, which are common during winter celebrations.

We're now much more prepared with Anya around the holidays and make sure to provide her with lots of safe treats and toys to enjoy. As members of the family, we want to include our pets in every major milestone and tradition, but an emergency visit to the vet isn't on anyone's holiday wish list! 🚫

Dr. I. Wonder is here to answer your questions regarding your furry family members. If you have a question, email it to us at danielle@NeighbourhoodPetClinic.com. Our team at Neighbourhood Pet Clinic will tap into their collective experience to answer your various questions.



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FESTIVE GOAT CHEESE STUFFED DATES



Oh joy, it's that time of year! The time for family, friends, and FOOD! If you're looking for help with the latter, I'm here to save you some time and stress in the kitchen. Not only is this my favorite go-to appetizer recipe for hosting and bringing with me to gatherings, but it's also super delicious and so easy to prepare.

INGREDIENTS

- 15 Medjool dates
- 4 oz goat cheese
- ½ cup of nuts (chopped pistachios, pecan halves or chopped walnuts are all delicious!)
- honey to drizzle on top
- 1 tsp of fresh thyme for garnish

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Cut dates in half and remove pit.
- 2 Stuff each date with goat cheese, top with nut of choice, drizzle with honey and garnish with fresh thyme.
- 3 You're done!! Can you believe how easy that is??

Enjoy and happy holidays from my little family to you and yours! 🍷

Jenn Giurgevich is the founder of Spark Nutrition & Health, a virtual nutrition consulting business. Visit www.sparknutritionandhealth.ca for more information.



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WINTER BOOTS: THE DREADED SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT FIT

It is the most wonderful time of year, snow falling, children playing, but then you remember you need to get a new pair of boots to keep their feet warm. Parents struggle to find the right boots for their children that are not too tight or heavy. Depending on your child's age and how fast they grow, a handy tip is to buy your children's boots two sizes up from what you would normally buy. Winter boots need to fit children in Canada from October to March. That is a long time when children grow so quickly. Your feet will stay warmer when your boots fit properly because the room allows air to circulate around the foot.

When choosing the right size we do not recommend holding your child's foot to the bottom of the sole because with the liner, the boot size can be very deceiving. We recommend taking the liner or insole out of the boot. Try on the boot liner or place the

child's foot on the liner, ensuring the foot is at the back. Verify the width of the foot in the liner or the insole. If the foot is hanging over the insole or is pushing on the seams, the boot is too narrow. When the boot is too narrow or too wide we recommend switching brands as it is not a matter of sizing up or down. A finger width or longer at the toe is the perfect amount of room to allow for growth and last an entire season.

My child wears AFOs. What boots do you recommend that can accommodate the brace?

- **KAMIK SNOW BUGS 3** - lightweight boots that have a wide Velcro opening and waterproof soles



- **BILLY FOOTWEAR** - zipper opening to allow easy donning



- **BUTLER 3 IN 1 BOOT - MACARONI ORTHOTICS EDITION**

V-stitched front-open liner to better accommodate braces



If you need any help in finding footwear that works for you or your child, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office. We would be more than willing to help order your child shoes or boots that can accommodate them or their bracing needs. 

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HOW TO HAVE THE PERFECT HOLIDAY SEASON. SERIOUSLY!

With the holidays quickly approaching, it's no secret that along with the festive lights, spiked eggnog and jingle bells, comes a great deal of added anxiety, mindless spending and a sense of overwhelming obligation. Sometimes the most wonderful time of the year can also feel like the most stressful time of the year... but it doesn't have to. I'm sharing my top three tips on how to have the perfect holiday this year. I'm talking about curating a holiday season that you not only look forward to, but wait for it... actually enjoy!

1 Be intentional with your commitments. I know you have your holiday traditions of who you see and what you do. Sometimes these traditions can be great and offer a healthy dose of nostalgia, but it's important to be mindful and pay attention to how you feel about them. Ask yourself if it is something you still look forward to doing or if it still serves

a purpose in your life. Don't feel bad about saying 'no' or declining invitations to events that no longer excite you. Instead, think of what would ignite your child-like holiday spirit and run with it.

2 Spend time with people who make you feel loved. If it doesn't happen to be your family, then Merry Friend-mas! There is nothing worse than dreading every day leading up to the family gathering that makes you feel undervalued, unloved or unappreciated. Save

the obligatory visits for random (very short) coffee dates throughout the year instead. That's if you even want to do that. Reserve your time throughout the holiday season for people who make you merry!

3 It's the thought that counts. You know the saying! So stop mindless spending and start gifting from the heart. Embrace simplicity and don't underestimate the power of a handwritten card, local baked goods, a great book, a cozy blanket or a packet of seasonal tea. The holidays aren't about racking up debt, they're about showing each other we care. Bring it back to basics and don't think that a dollar amount equates to the value of a human being. 🍪



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Embracing the future of the firm, Siskinds has moved to City Centre Towers on Dundas Street, offering expansive space across five floors and ample free parking.

With a workforce of over 200 people providing legal services to fellow residents of Southwestern Ontario, we are pleased to see our roots grow in our head-office city. Our reach extends across Canada and beyond, but home is where our heart is.

From our new location, we will continue to offer the strength of a big firm with the culture of a small firm.

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